

PM rapped for retaining ACA boss
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Fauwaz Abdul Aziz

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi came under fire today for retaining the services of Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) director-general Zulkipli Mat Nor.

According to PAS Youth, the premier should not have extended Zulkipli's tenure after knowing that he had been accused of corruption and abuse of power.

"I cannot accept that Abdullah had appointed a person beset with so many scandals and issues as director-general," its chief Salahuddin Ayub told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur.

"Positions of importance such as the ACA director-general should be filled by those whose track record prove beyond doubt their integrity, character and reputation," he said.

Last night, the prime minister revealed that Zulkipli had been investigated twice before.

He said when Zulkifli, a former high-ranking police officer, was appointed as ACA director-general in 2001, there was a probe against him but he was cleared of all the allegations.

Before his term was extended in 2005, another probe was conducted, and again it was found that there was no case against him, Abdullah added.

Three extensions

Zulkipli, a former top police officer, was first appointed as ACA director-general in 2001 by former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Mahathir then extended his tenure for a year when the ACA chief reached retirement, and Abdullah did the same in 2005. Last year, the premier extended Zulkipli's appointment until 2008.

On Monday, a report exposed by an anti-corruption watchdog highlighted the allegations of corruption and abuse of power by Zulkipli.

The report was penned by former Sabah ACA chief Mohamad Ramli Manan and sent to former inspector-general of police Mohd Bakri Omar last year.

Copies were also sent to Abdullah, the attorney-general, auditor-general and civil service director-general.

Zulkipli has since denied all the allegations. He also said that he was vetted and cleared by the ACA and police prior to his appointment.

Nazri rapped too

Meanwhile, PAS Youth also took a swipe at Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz for ruling out the need to suspend Zulkipli.

Yesterday, the minister said there is no need for a suspension unless the ACA chief is charged in court.

Salahuddin said although the statement was "legally right, it was morally wrong." Zulkipli must step down to allow investigations into the charges to proceed unimpeded by his presence as the top official of the anti-corruption body, he added.

"We are disappointed with Nazri's statement. These are typical statements made in Parliament to perpetuate the status quo ... and to protect those in power," he claimed.

Apart from the corruption and abuse of power allegations, the report also revealed that Zulkipli had been accused of a sexual crime and assault in 1997.

However, attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail said that police investigations back then had found no grounds for prosecution.

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